



## Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

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### **Address of the State President at the celebration of the 18th of November**

Distinguished guests, beloved people and celebrants of our nations Birthday!

I greet you all on the 82nd anniversary of the momentous day when the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed, and together with all the nation I bestow upon Latvia our peoples ancient blessing: May you live as long as the Sun.

We stand on the threshold of a new century in anticipation of the unfolding of history, which in only a few years time will allow Latvia to become a member state of both the European Union and the NATO Alliance. We have set out these goals for our nation because their achievement will open the door to advantages that are already enjoyed by the nations which constitute these international bodies.

We have undertaken to put in order and perfect our lawmaking, our governing bodies, our economic structures and our social order, to a level that complies with the highest of European and international standards. Only these, the highest of standards, are worthy of us.

We are not second- or third-class citizens of the world. We are not orphans of humanity, or outcasts of civilization. We are not errand boys or scapegoats for others. We are the free citizens of a free nation. We are capable of standing on our feet, with our backs straight and our heads held high in courage, with a clear view of who we are and where we are going.

We, the inhabitants and citizens of Latvia, long to live a life of human dignity in a free, independent, democratic, open, law-abiding and just nation. In our history we have experienced enough oppression, injustice, tyranny, and subjugation driven by bloodthirsty madness. Our cup runneth over with suffering, and we now wish to lead a better life. We have earned this. We are prepared to proceed and to commit all our efforts to secure this for ourselves.

Following long years of oppression, we are once again masters in our native land. Now the time has come to build our prosperity, to assure our daily bread, our education, our security and our health, for all the nations people.

We must catch up in many fields, but we cannot afford to do so for long. We have only a couple of years at our disposal to show of what we are capable, to prove that we are not lagging behind others. We have only a couple of years to ensure that we do not get relegated to a hopelessly backward group of countries, but that we gain upon and even surpass some of the developed nations.

Today, in the name of Latvia, I wish to thank all those who are loyal towards this nation, who support and strengthen it with the diligence of their labour, and the conscientious fulfilment of their commitments. You are the salt of our earth. You are the foundations of our statehood. You are the cornerstones of our future. I thank all of those who respect and love their Land, because She is the Mother who has nurtured us. It is not for us, Her children, to ask whether She has earned our love, but rather it is we who must prove that we have earned the right to be called Her children.

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I wish to thank all those who include Latvia in their prayers to God, and who keep in their hearts a vision of how great, honourable, and sublimely beautiful this country can be.

Let us all pray together for our nation and our people, so that Gods mercy and grace may shine down upon us, and that the powers of the Heavens assist us in all endeavours where our human powers prove too weak.

We all have a vision of how we wish to see our nation. Our objective is to achieve justice for all, and living standards worthy of human dignity. This has not yet been achieved, but achieve it we must. It is within our powers to do so. We will accomplish this, but only once we are firmly convinced that it is possible to live in another manner, that it is possible to effect change.

Our enemy at this moment is ourselves, or rather, more precisely, it is the spirit of darkness which feeds off our weaknesses, and which we have permitted to shroud our land like a black mist. We must understand what we are struggling against and why, if we wish to see our land flourish and evolve more rapidly. We must resist those forces of darkness which are called: irresponsibility, amorality and licentiousness.

Among the servants of darkness we find all those who show no regard for their duty, no regard for their fellow humans, no regard for their nation who think only and exclusively of themselves and their immediate gratification. They live as though they existed all alone on this earth. They live as though there was no tomorrow.

However much we must resist these mercenaries and servants of darkness, we each must also draw the line of the battle within. We must not allow ourselves to be subjugated by those forces of darkness which bear the names: apathy, cynicism, indifference and depression. There is no easier victim for the enemies of our people than a community that is demoralized and drowning in despair.

I empathize with the indignation that many of you currently feel about events and misdeeds that have wrought so much damage to the community as a whole and that have not yet received their just punishment. Our responsibility is to do everything within our powers to establish a nation of justice a lawful state, both in the spirit and the letter of the law. But let us exercise forbearance. Let us not turn our backs and declare the country worthless when our efforts do not always reach their mark.

Practise the opposite. Put even more effort into those great strides on the path towards justice no matter how long and how hard-won the battle may be.

Our duty is to provide that our nation evolves and develops. We must be as diligent in the upkeep of our governing bodies as we are in the care of our own children. We must cultivate our nation with the same love and attention that we tend to our personal gardens and homes.

The independent Latvian state is an achievement that can no longer be taken away from us. Our flag flies next to the flags of other nations, our hymn resounds during times of victory and celebration. These are our symbols of recognition and a part of our identity.

Latvias freedom is a value that has been reclaimed at a high price, measured in suffering and blood. Now it has been given into our hands. Latvias statehood, which has been recovered, is a treasure with which we have been entrusted. It is now up to us, as to how we handle our Destiny.

Our country is evolving, our country is developing, and signs of progress are becoming more visible year by year. Much still remains to be done, and we possess the ability to do it. These are not superhuman and grand Herculean tasks, but normal and appropriate actions in response to the given circumstances. We do not wish to depart for the Moon. We just long for a normal life. We do not demand paranormal abilities from those in positions of responsibility just a normal and honest commitment to their work.

Fortunately there are many people in Latvia who not only accomplish what is necessary, but go much further. There is so much talent in our land, so much ability, such potential and imagination, such an abundance of creative spirit and originality. These are our real natural resources, these are the treasures that we can share with Europe and the world.

We can be truly proud of our people and our attainments. We can hold in high esteem those Latvians who have distinguished themselves in so many fields.

It matters not what ancestral nationality they belong to, or what their mother tongue may be: Latvian, Russian or any other. They are all equally the sons and daughters of Latvia, who carry our nations name with honour, here at home and out into the world. Latvia needs everyone and anyone who is capable of loving and respecting it, all those who are ready to be loyal and committed to it. In this we must not exercise any restrictions or prejudices.

As the President of the Republic of Latvia, I invite everyone who cherishes this land to join in our community of citizens, if they are not yet citizens. Let us all work together, because we will all gain more than can be hoped for by working separately.

These gloomy and damp November days when we celebrate Latvias statehood remind us that the dark can be vanquished by creating light in its place. Our mission is not to curse the darkness, but to light the candle in the dark. Let each one of us ignite our own candle and inundate Latvia with light.

Light can conquer darkness, if we wish it and if we have faith. I have faith in the Latvian people, I have faith in the Latvian nation, I have faith in the future of Latvia.

God bless Latvia.